

## IMAGI-NATION OF WOMEN AS GENDERED NATIONAL SUBJECTS IN TURKISH NOVELS (1923–1938)

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### *Abstract*

This article seeks to explain how women have been depicted in novels during the early Republican period (1923–1938). My main objective is to explore how women have been located in fiction in Turkey's nation-building project. I will show which themes were used and which characteristics were emphasized in portraying female heroes of these narratives. The representations of women articulated in the novels of this period are meaningful in terms of understanding the imagination of 'new Turkish Women' in Turkish nationalism. The main concern here is twofold: to examine how women have been made as national subjects and elaborate on those characteristics, which have been used in the construction of Turkish women in Turkish novels.

My starting point for the analysis of the novels is Benedict Anderson's theory, which suggests that the nation is an imagined community both politically and culturally (Anderson, 1983: 6). The definition of the nation as 'an imagined community' leads us to the point that how we imagine our community influences how we experience it. In this imagination, different metaphors and symbols used in common language are important in defining how members of a community interact with each other, which roles they envision for themselves and which qualities they attribute for themselves. The perception of social reality is formed largely by the representational systems and the literary canon is considered as the most significant form of representation because it is possible to find out the expressions of highest ideals and aspirations in literary representation (Morris, 1993: 8).

The idea of nation as an imagined community has a close connection with the idea that nationalism cannot only be analyzed as a political form based on the idea of self-governing of the nation or as a political ideology built upon the theme of identification with the nation

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(Carey-Webb, 1998: 10). It is suggested that the most significant thing about the nation-state is not its expansion as a political form but its infusion as a deeply held consciousness, a way of feeling, thinking and acting, accepted by human beings (Carey-Webb, 1998). People are not national by birth but they are thought to be national, to be members of a nation and to think of themselves as national citizens, in Carey-Webb's terms, '*they are made national*' (Carey-Webb, p. 10). Carey-Webb points out that the making of national subjects is a kind of discourse that involves an enormous diversity of cultural and linguistic processes. Among these different processes, literary texts play a prominent role and literature functions as a form of machinery that serves to consolidate the nation-state (Carey-Webb, 1998: 4). As it is suggested, literature functions as a means for "orchestrating an ideological consensus" (Jusdanis, 1991, xi) in the creation of collective identities.

Among different literary genres, the novel can be regarded as a means to work out imaginary solutions to different problems because it is in the novel that different and conflicting problems for the nations are debated by representation of some different and imaginary figures (Franco, 1998: 130–131). An analysis of the leading characters, or heroes in the fiction is important in providing a powerful understanding of different ways in which women and men are represented. Since literary works and literature have the ability to function as signifiers of national identity (During, 1983: 138), it is not wrong to suggest that all the heroes and heroines of novels portray both the ideal characters needed in a society and reflect what society accepts as normative.

In this article, I will focus on some novels written between the years of 1923–1938. 1923 signifies the establishment of the Turkish Republic, 1938 being the year Mustafa Kemal Atatürk died, fifteen years after the establishment of the Republic. In order to have a better understanding of women's images, I will analyze the novels of *Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoglu* (1889–1974) and *Peyami Safa* (1899–1961).

Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoglu (1889–1974) wrote many articles, novels and poems in different newspapers. He taught philosophy and literature in high schools. During the War of Independence, he traveled around Anatolia and supported the War of Independence through the articles he wrote. He was one of Mustafa Kemal's close friends and held various political and bureaucratic positions. After the establishment of the Republic, he became deputy twice in the

parliament between 1923 and 1934 and between 1961 and 1965 and was a member of the Constitutional Assembly after the 1960 military intervention. In addition to that, he worked as an ambassador in different countries. Peyami Safa (1899–1961), on the other hand, after working as a teacher, started publishing a newspaper called *Yirminci Asir* (Twentieth Century). His career as a writer started with novels written for this newspaper. He wrote many novels, articles and published many periodicals. It is possible to suggest that these writers can be regarded as representatives of the canon of the Turkish nationalist literature. In this sense, they can be defined as system writers. The novels that will be treated are chosen through a reading of several works of these authors. The most important criterion of selecting these works is the fact that they are important in terms of illustrating and representing women as a part of a particular nationalist project.

#### TURKISH NATIONALISM: SYNTHESIS BETWEEN CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION

The main pillar lying at the core of Turkish nationalism has been the idea of Westernization, which was also the main motive behind the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Since the beginning of modernization in the Ottoman Empire started by the Tanzimat reforms in 1839, modernization was identified with the idea of Westernization. This understanding of modernization is based on the adaptation of Western practices by preserving the cultural values and norms brought into the picture the problematic of the Turkish national identity on the basis of West and East dichotomy.

In order to make a synthesis between the West and the East, Westernization was taken into consideration as the adoption of the “good aspects” of the West such as its technology and the rejection of its bad aspects such as Western moral values. The separation of culture and civilization formulated by Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), the most important thinker systematizing the content of Turkish nationalist movement, remained as the backbone of Turkish nationalism as well as the pillar of the Republican ideology. Briefly stated, civilization means modes of actions composed of the traditions, which are created by different ethnic groups and transmitted from one to another. Culture on the other hand, includes

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the mores of a particular nation and consequently it is unique (Gokalp, 1959: 23). For Gokalp, civilizational elements are of crucial importance in the life of human beings only when they enter into the service of culture. Without a cultural basis, civilization becomes a mechanical imitation and it is unable to penetrate into the inner life of people. In this sense, nation becomes very important because it is nation, which forms the source for cultural values (Gokalp, 1970: 70–75).

Gokalp defined the nation as the independent social unit lying at the core of Western civilization and Western civilization was an entity composed of different nations with different cultural essences (Gokalp, 1959: 23–24). In this respect, the connection between nation, culture and civilization constituted an important part in his formulation of Turkish nationalism. Gokalp defended the idea that Turkish culture should be preserved in the modernization process because the preservation of cultural characteristics was also the condition for accomplishing civilization (Gokalp, 1959).

## COLLECTIVE SOUL: ‘WE’ OVER ‘I’

In Gokalp’s view, Turkish nationalism represented a cultural ideal and a philosophy of life, which laid the basis for social solidarity. Gokalp explained the modern nation as a community in a unique complex of cultural values, on the one hand and a society based on organic solidarity, division of labor and functional differentiation, on the other hand (Gokalp, 1959: 25). What is important in the understanding of this concept of ‘organic solidarity’ is the fact that priority is given to society and individuals do not and cannot exist independently outside society. Society is thought of as an organism whose parts work together and each part of the society such as family or government plays a particular role in maintaining the betterment of the society (Gokalp, 1959: 124). In this organic society, individuals do not have rights but duties and obligations, which are necessary to hold society together.

This idea of organic solidarity, which occupies an important place in the understanding of the construction of the gendered national subjects and the position of women within the nationalist discourse, is reflected in the idea of “collective soul”, which is defined as follows:

When a number of individuals constitute a collectivity, a new psychological element, which we call the collective soul, comes into existence as a product of interaction between individual souls. The collective soul is different from the individual soul both quantitatively and qualitatively. When individuals form a collectivity, a wave of excitement and ecstasy begins to invade their souls. You can never see individual psychological states such as insensitivity, indifference and quietism among the individuals in a crowd. Their souls are under the captivity of an intense emotion, a deep rapture. Such states, furthermore, are different from individual experiences such as appetite, anger, and fear, which we also find among animals, and are even opposite to collective emotions. (Gokalp, 1959: 189–190)

As can be drawn from these sentences, Gokalp emphasizes the importance of society, whose value undermines the value of the individual. He suggests that it is society that creates the personality of the individual through its language, literature, traditions, science, law and morals; in short, through its culture; more surprisingly, the more the individual participated in various aspects of social life, the stronger the personality he would require (Gokalp, 1959: 190). In this understanding, the individual does not have rights but duties and this is well reflected in one of Gokalp's poems where he says:

Do not say I have rights  
There is only one duty, no right  
There is no 'I' and 'you' but 'We'  
We are both ruler and ruled to be  
We mean One  
I and you worship the One

(Parla 1985: 68)

The idea of 'collective soul', which values the individual according to his service to social solidarity and the public interest, occupies an important place in understanding Turkish nationalism. In this organic solidarity, the concept of morality is of crucial importance. Gokalp suggests that the object of morality is society; and moral sacrifices of the person are for the sake of society. According to Gokalp, moral rules cannot be determined by individual consciousness or reason. It is the social consciousness, which distinguishes and determines moral values (Gokalp, 1959: 150–151). These three concepts: the synthesis between culture and civilization, the idea of collective soul and the importance of morality, function as important

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keys not only in the examination of Turkish nationalism but they also offer important clues in understanding the basis on which the gendered national subjects have been constructed.

## IDEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF TURKISH LITERATURE

The novel as a literary genre made its entry into Ottoman culture between 1870 and 1890 and its development was closely connected with the development of the idea of Westernization. The novel imported from the West was regarded as an integral part of modernization and, since its initiation, was taken into consideration as a tool of education rather than an artistic piece of work. As Serif Mardin, a Turkish historian and political scientist, puts it, the great majority of the first Ottoman novels written in that period were '*romans à thèse*' (thesis novels) taking up explicitly the problems raised by social and political change (Mardin, 1974: 403). In the same parallel, as it is argued, the first novelists were not men of imagination because they did not construct anything on their creativity but they were mainly concerned with the problems that society faced (Tanpinar, 1982). From the early stage of the Tanzimat Period (1839–1876), which signifies the first step towards the idea of modernization in the Ottoman Empire, women's position became a powerful symbol of the society's modernity. The amelioration of women's conditions and women's rights were taken into consideration as important components of development and modernization. For that reason, the most elaborated subjects by the first novelists were the problem of the status of women in society and that of Westernization.

In her book *Babalar ve Oğullar* (Fathers and Sons), Jale Parla pointed out that there was a desire for 'a father figure' among writers of the Tanzimat period (Parla, 1990:17). Parla suggested that the main concerns of the writers of the time were the description of the boundaries of Westernization and the protection of the moral standards of the society. Moreover, Parla declared that according to the writers, the preservation of the cultural values in the Westernization process had to be secured by the sultan in society, the father figure in the family and by the writer in literature. The identification of writer with sultan and father is significant in terms of understanding the role they envision for themselves. It is

remarkable because like a sultan representing authority in society or a father in patriarchal family structures, writers of the period found this power in themselves and this figurative meaning did not change after the establishment of the Turkish Republic, which brought new generations of sons into the picture. In this regard, it would not be wrong to suggest that Turkish literature could not challenge the tradition of the Tanzimat, where the main theme of the novels was Westernization. Each writer considers himself responsible for elaborating 'essential issues' and the dichotomies such as East-West, individual-society, past-present, being *alafranca* (Westernized)-being *alaturca* (Turkish) form the main worry of each writer (Kahraman, 2000b).

The overlap between ideology and literature brings us to another important point significant to this study. Since fiction can be regarded as a means through which the idea of organic solidarity was voiced and since fiction has been imagined according to ideological context—in the Turkish case this is the nationalist discourse—there is a clear absence of individuality. It is possible to suggest that '*je est un autre*' which means 'I is another' in the novels written during that period (Kahraman, 2000a: 37). As Kahraman mentions, the main characters' identities are determined by ideology: whether heroes or villains, these characters are not self-aware. This means that '*je*' or 'I' is not the expression of the individual but it is the spokesman of the collective identity. In other words, '*je*' does not refer to individual feelings, thoughts or individual expressions but it expresses collective sentiments, collective messages and collective ideals. All the heroines and the heroes not only speak on behalf of the society but also as fictive personalities representing the dominant hegemonic structure.

In light of the points mentioned above, I will examine the main themes of the novels in order to gain an insight into which elements are employed in the representation of the Turkish women as gendered national subjects and which topics were used in the portrayal of women as gendered national subjects.

#### WOMEN BETWEEN 'WEST' AND 'EAST'

The idea of Westernization remains an important motif in understanding the representation of women as gendered national subjects. As argued by Bulent Kahraman, Turkish literature can be

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taken into consideration as a sphere constructed on the main promises of the Republican ideology and on binary oppositions such as Orient-West, individual-society, being *a la turca* or *a la franca*. (Kahraman, 2000b: 49). Connectedly, Berna Moran considers this aspect of Turkish novels as a problematic aspect of Westernization. He points out that Westernization lies at the center of all the literary works and it describes its functions, its construction and its main characters to a large extent (Moran, 1983: 21–22). As becomes more apparent in the analysis of women's images in the novels, fictional characters are not representative types but they are presented as models showing how Westernization should be understood and what would be the negative aspects of Westernization in the case of its misinterpretation. In this respect, the novel has to be regarded as a medium through which the dichotomy between Westernization and Turkish national identity has been articulated.

*Fatih Harbiye*, written by Peyami Safa in 1931 is an important novel, reflecting the dichotomy between the West and the East. The plot of the novel reflects the chaos in societal values in Turkish society emerging as a result of Westernization between the years of 1920 and 1930 in Istanbul and the effects of this disorder on women (Safa, 1997). Neriman is a girl who lives in a traditional district Fatih in Istanbul with her father Faiz Bey. Sinasi, who lives in the same district, is Neriman's fiancé. Both take music lessons at *Darulelhan* (Musical Conservatory). Neriman plays *ud* (lute) and Sinasi plays *kemençe* (kemenche), two traditional musical instruments. In the story, Neriman befriends Macit, a young man who attends violin courses in the European music department of the same conservatory. Macit, lives in Harbiye, a modern district in Istanbul.

After becoming acquainted with Macit, Neriman starts to make comparisons between Fatih, where she lives and Harbiye, where Macit leads his life. As a consequence of the meetings with Macit, she turns out to have negative feelings towards her own milieu and has deep admiration for Western styles of life. Neriman faces an important dilemma when Macit invites her to a ball in Pera Palace. Though she would like to go to the ball, her father's financial problems present some obstacles to attending the ball—specifically what to wear. The story of a Russian girl and a poor Russian young man told by some relatives of Neriman affects her deeply. In the story, a Russian actress leaves the poor Russian man that she loves for the sake of a rich Greek man. While the Russian man goes on



living by means of playing the guitar, the Russian girl leads a glamorous life. She goes from one party to the next, yet such a glittering life does not satisfy her and she cannot be happy; because she grasps, in the narrator's terms, "the real virtues and the fake values of civilization" (Safa, 1997: 100). Finally, the Russian girl commits suicide since she cannot get a response for her love from the Russian man when she returns to him. Neriman feels herself in a similar situation as the Russian girl. She sees Sinasi in the personality of the Russian man and Macit in that of the Greek man. At the end of the novel, she gives up the idea of going to the ball and goes back to Fatih.

From the beginning of the novel, Neriman's attraction towards a Western lifestyle upset her relations with her fiancé. Because she greatly admires things from the West, she begins to criticize her environment as well as her family who brought her up according to Eastern culture. Whereas everything in the district where she lives, Fatih, seems to her old-fashioned and boring, she is influenced by elements such as movies and theater, which are spreading Western culture in Harbiye. Although she is engaged to Sinasi, she begins to admire Macit, who conducts a Western style of life.

The novel mirrors all these dichotomies that Neriman lives in the face of these two separate worlds. The first contradiction starts with the event when Neriman goes to a ball with Macit. Like Macit, a Western man, the ball also symbolizes the West and for the first time Neriman tells lies to her fiancé and to her family. After the first ball, Neriman feels a dilemma, which reflects actually the situation of the Turkish nation remaining in a dual position. On the one hand, she lives in an authentic place where people lead a traditional life and she feels that she is not happy living in this place with these traditional people. On the other hand, in the ball, she meets Western people who attract Neriman with their Western way of life. For the second invitation of Macit, she cannot decide whether to go or not. How to make a balance between "good" and "bad" aspects of Westernization? Neriman symbolizes a woman who fails to understand the balance between the materiality of the West and the spirituality of the East, which forms the core of Turkish nationalism as well as the separation of civilization and culture expressed by Ziya Gokalp. She understands westernization as living in a Western way and modernization as resorting to Western

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codes of conduct. She wants to go to the ball, to dance, to be elegant and to live in luxury. In one of the conversations with Sinasi, she expresses her preoccupation with changing her life style as follows:

I want to lead a more civilized life [. . .] Look, what is happening around us, don't you see that all is changing? Am I not a girl of this land too? Don't I also have the right to live a life of the civilized? (Safa, 1997: 86)

The places and the characters of this novel have significant functions in the fiction in terms of reflecting the duality between the West and the East. Faiz Bey, the father of Neriman and Sinasi represent Eastern men; Macit is the prototype for a completely Westernized Turkish man; Neriman exemplifies a woman who experiences different contradictions between the West and the East; Neriman could not make a decision between two men, Macit and her fiancé Sinasi symbolizing the dichotomy between these two worlds. At the beginning of the novel, Neriman is in love with Macit and every action, every word and every characteristic of Sinasi seems to be very boring, ordinary and traditional for her whereas Macit means everything new, attractive and Western.

The comparison between the West and the East is not only realized by different characters but also by different metaphors in the novel. The discourse on music is of crucial importance in the construction of this dichotomy. The *ud* (lute) Neriman herself plays and the violin Macit plays take an important part in this comparison. Neriman does not like the form of *ud* (lute), a traditional musical instrument but she admires violin that Macit plays. After recognizing Macit, Neriman turns out to be irritated by the *ud* (lute) she plays:

Ogh! This *ud* (lute) I hold in my hands makes me sick, I feel like breaking it. [. . .] What on earth happened and I began to play it? As though the trouble at home is not sufficient, *Darulelhan* (the Conservatory)! [. . .] It is nothing but the effect created by the family. My father received Eastern culture. He plays *ney* (nay), and my relatives are just the same [. . .] yet they all irritate me. (Safa, 1997: 25)

Apart from the instrument she plays, she also starts complaining about living in Fatih, a very traditional district in Istanbul and she admires Harbiye, a district having a Western outlook. She says:

The district I live in, the house I lead my life, most of the people I speak to, all of these make me sick. I can see many unemployed, vagabond, obscurantist people sitting in the cafes all the time whenever I pass through the Fatih Square. If you are clean and well dressed just a little bit, they stare at you in an unpleasant manner, God knows what they talk about you; a person cannot even walk on the road in any way. And how about the shops on the sides of the road? Cooks and cafes are everywhere! The only occupation of the men is sitting at a cafe or in front of a mosque and watching outside. I had a look at the shops from *Tunel* to *Galatasaray* yesterday. Even the artisans have a sense of taste. One feels himself as if he were wandering in a garden. All display windows have elaborate ornamentations. Even the cheapest good of a little value is presented in such a way that it seems like a jewel. What's more, its people are also significantly different. They do not stare at anyone in any way. They know how to walk and what to wear as well. They know everything, that is to say.

(Safa, 1997: 26)

In this comparison, Neriman likens the Eastern people to cats because she thinks that the only things they do are eat, give birth and live in dreams. However, the Western people are active "awake even when they are asleep" like dogs. Neriman makes the comparison as follows:

The reason why the Christian houses abound in dogs and the Muslim ones in cats was this: The Easterners are like cats in nature while the Western people resemble dogs! Cats satisfy their hunger and thirst, sleep and reproduce; the whole life of a cat is spent in a dream on a cushion: and even when it is awake, it sometimes looks as if it is fast asleep dreaming; this flabby, lazy and daydreaming creature does not like work at all. Dogs, however, are fit, energetic and nimble. They are of some use, in fact, of many. They are awake even when they sleep. They hear even the lightest sounds and they jump and cry.

(Safa, 1997: 45)

All these examples reveal how Neriman interprets Westernization and what meanings she attributes to it. Ferit, the friend of Sinasi represents the voice of the writer and he criticizes women in the personification of Neriman because of their approach to it. He thinks that women understand Westernization very superficially. He criticizes these women as follows:

Women are doomed to understand civilization with their eyes. These women are much happier than the real defenders of civilization. They

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are contented with shapes and a single change in colors makes them enjoy themselves.

(Safa, 1997: 94)

For Ferit, women translate Westernization as the ability to go to movie or to party and to live in luxury. For that reason, he blames women for not understanding civilization as a matter of culture but they perceive it as a matter of fantasy. He thinks that women admire Westernization unconsciously and this addiction to formalism makes them dandy (Safa, 1997: 94). This novel remains meaningful in terms of reflecting the desire to achieve a balance between culture and civilization in Gokalp's terms. What is crucial in the process of Westernization is the preservation of Turkish culture against the adverse effects of Western civilization. The image of Neriman symbolizes a woman who is expected to make a balance between Western civilization and Turkish culture.

## SOCIABILITY OF WOMEN

The establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 was followed by the introduction of several measures, legal and constitutional changes, which aimed to eliminate the Islamic basis of the state and to emphasize the development of a secular ideology. Among these reforms, the adoption of Swiss Civil Code in 1926, the enfranchisement of women to local elections in 1930 and to national elections in 1934 were important steps in recognizing women as individuals. The new Turkish state framed images of 'emancipated women', who have an unveiled presence in the public sphere in order to distance itself from the Islamic-Ottoman state. Women's modernized visibility and existence in political and social life were perceived as formal requirements of a democratic state. (Cinar, 2005: 60; Kadioglu, 1994: 652-653).

Women's emancipation from their traditional and religious roles and their visibility in public space are used to symbolize a change away from the gender roles constructed by Islamic religion. The most important feature of the emancipation of women is their sociability, which becomes a significant characteristic of women's images related with the construction of women as gendered national subjects. The sociability of women is a remarkable motif treated in the novels explaining better how women become the markers of

political goals and nationalist ideologies. Women are expected to participate in social life and to take on social responsibilities alongside their traditional roles of mother and wife. The sociability of women becomes an important marker that makes the new Turkish woman different from her Ottoman households.

*Ankara* (Ankara), published by Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoglu in 1934 deserves special attention in this respect because it is a good piece of work illustrating different images of a Turkish woman in three different historical periods of the Turkish Republic including the 1920s, the first years of the establishment of the Republic and the period between 1937–1943 (Karaosmanoglu, 1999). The significant motive of the novel is not only the representation of the tension between Westernization and nationalism in these three different periods but also the idealization of women's involvement in the public life in the character of the heroine, Selma.

In the first part of the novel, Selma is married to Nazif Bey, a banker and she moves from Istanbul to Ankara. Although she is a well-educated woman, she is neither interested nor involved in national issues. After their arrival to Ankara, a friend of Nazif Bey introduces them to Hakki Bey, who is an active member of *Kuvayi Milliye* (Nationalist Forces). When the War of Independence starts, Selma begins to work as a nurse in a hospital in Eskisehir. At this time, she becomes aware of the indifference of her husband towards the national struggle. After her experience in Eskisehir, she continues working as a nurse in Ankara. While she aims to be actively involved in the nationalist struggle and she is strongly tied to Ankara, her husband plans to leave Ankara and to go to Kayseri, when the Allied Forces move to Eskisehir. This makes Selma divorce Nazif Bey. In the second part, she is married to Hakki Bey, who actively participates in the War of Independence. After the establishment of the Republic, Hakki Bey devotes himself to a very different way of life—that of an over-Westernized one. Selma finds it difficult to understand why he lives in such a different manner and she shares her views and her sentiments with a young writer, Neset Sabit. In the final part of the novel, she gets married to Neset Sabit, who emphasizes the importance of Anatolia. They start traveling around Anatolia and Selma feels very happy. At the end of the novel, she becomes the idealized Turkish woman who is actively involved in the social and political life of the Turkish nation.

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What remains crucial in this novel is the fact that Selma symbolizes a different type of woman in each part. In the first part of the novel, Selma cannot find the comfort and the civilization of Istanbul in the rural town of Ankara situated in the steppes of Anatolia. Her lifestyle and clothing create distance between herself and her neighbors. Her neighbors represent the people of Anatolia, which has a significant meaning in the development of Turkish nationalism. At this point, it should be mentioned that Ankara as the capital of the new Republic symbolizes the centre of the new Turkish nation. The move from Istanbul to Ankara symbolizes the establishment of the Turkish Republic and the emergence of the new Turkish nation because Ankara becomes the capital of the new Republic whereas Istanbul signifies the Ottoman dynasty (Gole, 1996: 69). In this respect, Selma's move from Istanbul to Ankara where she would serve the people of the nation can be considered as being equal to the national goal.

After moving from Istanbul to Ankara, Selma dines at the same table with men, she rides horses and she wears silk socks, all of which represent a Western way of life but she remains very isolated from the political affairs and she is very distant to the emerging social and political events. The portrayal of Selma as a woman who is very distant to the emerging social and political events is expressive in terms of understanding the construction of the ideal image of woman as a socially and politically active woman. In the first part of the novel, she is living an isolated and passive life and is described as follows: "although she had a very good education and the capacity to understand the intellectual debates, she was never willing to be interested in the national affairs" (Karaosmanoglu, 1999: 25). Her main concern is to become accustomed to living in Ankara, which seems to her very difficult after living so many years in Istanbul.

In the second and the third parts of the novel, Selma starts understanding the importance of Ankara representing the new Turkish nation; she no longer feels herself to be different from Anatolian women and starts committing herself to serve the nation. This is what is expected from the ideal Turkish women: to take part actively in the society and to be in the service of the nation. She characterizes the idealized new Turkish woman, who is expected to participate in social life especially by undertaking services such as nursing or teaching. She starts thinking that women should

work hard for the development of their society and she defends the idea of working and having a meaningful life through work. In one of her conversations with her husband she tells him: "Not to earn my living but I would like to feel that I am useful for something. Did you unveil us only to dress us or to make us dance? What is the value of women's freedom if it is only for this purpose?" (Karaosmanoglu, 1999: 158).

The most significant aspect of this novel is the depiction of the different marriages Selma transacted in the various sections of the novel, which give important clues in terms of the construction of masculine national subjects. In the first part, when she moves to Ankara, she is married to an apolitical banker Nazif, who is not concerned at all with societal problems. At the beginning of her first marriage, she is happy with her husband but through time, she does not understand the indifference of her husband towards the social changes taking place. For that reason, she becomes alienated from this man. The social and political participation and the work for the development of the Turkish nation are 'duties' of both female and male members of the Turkish society because both of them are expected to represent the "collective soul" of the nation. The failure of Nazif in representing this collective soul is the main reason for their divorce. When troops of the Allied Forces move to Eskisehir, Nazif wants to run away to Kayseri instead of struggling against the enemies. At this point, Selma finds herself very distant to him and she decides to end her marriage.

In a sense, she divorces her first husband not because of some individualistic reasons but because of his indifference to the War of Independence. In the second part, she is married to Binbasi Hakki Bey, who at the beginning represented a very stable attitude towards the national struggle. After the War of Independence, Binbasi Hakki Bey resigns from the military and devotes himself to a job in business in Ankara, which becomes a center of embassies, banks and several companies. Although he is a military man who participated actively in the War of Independence, after the establishment of the Republic, he is no more devoted to the main promises of the Republic.

When he starts earning money, he sacrifices himself to an *a la franca* (Westernized) way of life. He enjoys himself at balls and becomes interested in different women. He decorates his house in a European style and he even becomes ridiculous by using some

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European rules of good manners that he reads from the books. The narrator criticizes Binbasi Hakki Bey in these sentences:

As for some of the former national fighters, for Hakki Bey too, after the reform in clothes, national cause has turned out to be something like a claim of elegance. For them, to be clothed like the European people, to dance like them, to live like them, and moreover, to be successful in the eyes of and among them seemed to be as important as gaining victory over these Europeans. When some of those foreigners in Turkish circles asked Hakki Bey "Have you learned to speak German like this in Berlin?", or Selma Hanim "You must have brought your clothes from Paris. I am right, aren't I?" This would mean to Turks a big step taken towards the way to civilization, and they would celebrate such responses in a festive mood.

(Karaosmanoglu, 1999: 112).

The significant change in his lifestyle happens in his attitude towards women. He regards women as objects or ornaments. This is basically the danger of 'over-Westernization', which refers to the idea that the 'ideal' members of society, whether men or women, should understand Westernization in Gokalp's terms, as the adoption of the "good aspects" of the West such as its technology and the rejection of its "bad aspects" such as its culture and its religion. Additionally, for the success of the Turkish Republic, they should never forget the main features of the Republican ideology.

In the third part of the novel, Selma, who is alienated from her second husband, marries for the third time. Her husband, Neset Sabit, the writer, also voices the main ideas of the novelist. Neset Sabit is a man who dedicates himself to the realization of the national goals and he is also an ardent defender of Turkish nationalism. He criticizes all the "Westernized people" like Binbasi Hakki Bey as persons who forget the meaning of society. He accuses these persons of having misunderstood the meaning of Westernization. He declares this as follows:

I don't know: Perhaps I am not a revolutionary in the sense you get. I have never regarded revolution as something to change the external forms of life. And I haven't got the slightest idea that it is a demand for comfort or the meeting of the demand for comfort. No doubt, the thing that cracks within us with a new *élan vital* (vital force) does shape a new body; I mean it forms a new crust. But at this stage, one can no longer talk about revolution. Here, there is the modeling of a certain type of life.

(Karaosmanoglu, 1999: 129).



In this new body, there is no place for people who consider their pleasures and their wishes superior to the needs of society. Again, here we come across the notion of morality explained by Gokalp. In criticizing the people who understand Westernization as a way of life and who regard him as an anarchist, Neset Sabit affirms:

An anarchist? I think, you make a big deal out of it! Is it really me who is an anarchist? No, Madam; it is the pot calling the kettle black, I would say! Anarchists are those folks in your circle, because you are such extremist individualists who survive outside and despite the society. But I am a man lost in society.

(Karaosmanoglu, 1999: 130).

His description of these Westernized people as ‘anarchists’ is important in understanding the meaning given to society in the construction of national identity. These ‘anarchists’ who neglect the community by living as they like, represent the most important danger for social harmony. Here is another instance of total rejection of any individualism, which seems to contradict with the idea of the collective soul. Neset Sabit has been portrayed as the ideal masculine character in the novel in terms of understanding the importance of society. This third man does not only symbolize the two characteristics mentioned above but he is also the ideal one who is able to know the place of the ‘ideal woman’ in the society. He expresses his view about the emancipation of women as follows:

Turkish women would have thrown their charshafs and their veils to be able to work with ease and comfort. For them, taking part in social life would not just mean joining social circles. Yes, the Turkish woman would use her freedom not to dance, to polish her nails or to be a victimized puppet to the laws of *Rue de La Paix*, but to accomplish her solemn and grave task to take active part in the making and development of new Turkey; she would make her choice and use her freedom in this cause.

(Karaosmanoglu, 1999: 141–142).

This quotation illustrates that with the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the emancipation of women is made part of the Turkish nation. This emancipation is closely related to idea that women would no longer be defined as puppets or as dolls, rather they would serve the nation, for the betterment of their society. As illustrated in the image of Selma, the most important feature of the

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ideal woman is the image of woman as a socially and politically active Turkish citizen, which would make her different from the women of the Ottoman households. As Hannah Papanek points out, certain ideals of women are propagated as indispensable to the attainment of an ideal society and that these ideals apply to women's active participation, women's personal behavior, dress, sexual activity and reproductive options (Papanek, 1994: 45). In the Turkish case, the involvement of Turkish women in the social and political life is an important indicator showing that the Turkish Republic is a secular and democratic state.

## WOMEN'S SEXUALITY AND PUNISHMENT OF WOMEN

Another important theme treated in the novels connected with the representation of the new Turkish women is sexuality, which has been identified with the idea of chastity and the protection of honor. In the novels, the image of Turkish women was idealized with regard to their position on social morality. Since female sexuality is identified with over-Westernization and corruption, everything relating to and reminding of sexuality is taken into consideration as a sign of demoralization. Although there is a strong emphasis upon the importance of women's participation in public life and their education, there is also the idea that women have to get rid off their sexuality in order to be accepted in public life.

*Sodom ve Gomora* (Sodome and Gomorra), written by Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoglu and first published in 1928, explains the moral and political corruption in Turkish society on the basis of a small group of wealthy people who are obsessed with being Westernized and who cooperate with the Allied Forces (Karaosmanoglu, 1981). These 'degenerated Turks', in the narrator's terms, belonging to a bourgeois class, have close relations and collaboration with the enemy in order to pursue their own interests. Most females symbolize sexual corruption that is linked to political corruption. Sexually passionate women character types are represented as examples to illustrate the demoralization in the society.

*Sodom ve Gomora* reflects the picture of Istanbul in the years of the War of Independence. In this picture, the principal female character of the novel, Leyla, is the daughter of Sami Bey, one of the Westernized Turks who has strong relations with the British. Both

Sami Bey and Leyla believe that the problems of the country should be resolved only by the interference of other countries. Leyla is a snob, a showy and spoiled woman. She is indifferent to the environment where she lives and she does not have the slightest idea of the War of Independence and the occupation of Istanbul by the Allied Forces. Necdet, who is the cousin of Leyla, is an enemy of the British. Although Leyla is engaged to Necdet, she also flirts with Captain Jackson Read, who is a British soldier of the Allied Forces. Leyla explains her relation with this unfaithful British man who frequently visits her in her place as “the necessities of *mondanité* (mundanity)” (Karaosmanoglu, 1981: 82).

Leyla returns to her fiancé and proposes that they should get married. Necdet refuses to marry her by saying that the country is in a big trouble and he thinks that it would be a big mistake to form a family in this situation of indefiniteness. After leaving Leyla, Necdet recognizes the importance of the nationalist struggle in Anatolia, which is under the foreign occupation. He turns out to be a person who attaches great importance to national pride, in the narrator’s words, “his individual consciousness has been melted in the national consciousness” (Karaosmanoglu, 1981: 293). At the end of the novel, Leyla has a psychological disorder and she goes to a medical center in Europe to recover but when she comes back, she dies.

Leyla is portrayed as a woman who is indifferent to political problems and whose main concern is being in a relationship with a man. Apart from Leyla, the other heroines of the novel have relations with enemy soldiers. These women are personified by the writer as loose, sexually promiscuous, immoral and of easy virtue because they use their sexuality in their personal relations and as mentioned above they are illiterate. Although they are women of a country occupied by foreign forces, they are portrayed as alienated from their nation and society. This seems to be significant because the writer tries to construct woman as an asexual being. The more she is asexualized, the more she is virtuous and she is enlightened. The more she is purified from sexual desires, the more socially active she is.

It is possible to say that the female becomes the passive object of the narrative gaze to be judged, praised or punished. The novel *Bir Tereddutun Romani* (*Novel of A Doubt*), by Peyami Safa published in 1933 is based on a triangle of love affairs between two women

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and a man, is an example for this characteristic of novels (Safa, 1998). The hero of the novel tries to make a decision between two women: Mualla and Vildan, who represent two different world-views. The heroines, Mualla and Vildan characterize the dichotomy, which lies at the core of all the novels.

Mualla carries all the values expected of an idealized Turkish woman. She is a young aristocrat girl living in Istanbul. She received a Western type of education. In this sense, she is a westernized woman with her education but she also protects her traditional moral values that are necessary for the betterment of the Turkish society. She symbolizes the ideal woman, who is to be praised and be proud of. Vildan, however, is portrayed as the opposite of this idealization by being the symbol of over-Westernization. Firstly, she refuses any identity, any nation, and even any name. She represents the evil because she is a woman who uses her sexuality freely. She is a 'free' woman and like all other free heroines, she is the one who has to be shamed and punished. As suggested by Tansu Bele, the writer represents this intentionally in order to show that the process of over-Westernization makes the individual spiritless; and sexual freedom and the materiality of the West are strong enough to collapse societies by demolishing the spirit of people (Bele, 1998: 28).

At the end of the novel, Vildan, the bad woman has been lost and there is not a clue in the novel as to what happened to her. The writer does not tell what she might have done or where she might have gone, so in a way, there is a total 'evaporation' of the bad woman from the situation. The disappearance of Vildan also means the end of hesitation and of chaos, which forms the central theme of the novel. In addition to suicide or illness, this is another way of removing these anomalous women characters whose presence opposes the idea of 'organic solidarity'. According to the writer, this kind of women who do not believe in anything, who lose their national feelings and who consider their personal wishes above the interests of the community can be considered as anomalous. The writer explains this anomaly by the term 'destruction' and he defines these anomalous women as '*déracinés*' (rootless people) (Safa, 1998: 179).

The disappearance of this type of women from the novel can be interpreted in two ways. In a way, the death of these bad women means their disappearance from the scene. The 'good women' are

necessary for the stability of society and for the presentation of moral rules; all of them symbolize the idea of the collective soul. However, the bad ones are regarded as being responsible for causing moral degradation and corruption. For that reason, they have to disappear or commit suicide. It is also possible to argue that Westernization can be described as suicide, as self-destruction unless cultural values and norms are preserved.

#### MOTHERHOOD: DISHONEST WOMAN VERSUS FAMILY-ORIENTED WOMAN

In the Turkish case, with the establishment of the Turkish Republic, there has been a transformation from old patriarchal family relationships based on male dominance to the emergence of a modern type of family in which women would enjoy, at least under the law, the possibility of directly participating in production and education. The main responsibility of the new woman is not only to adapt herself to the changing external situation and to take a more active role, but also she has to retain her spiritual role in the family. As Meyda Yegenoglu argues, while 'new' women should fulfill the necessities of modern life, they should not neglect the spirit of the nation. In this respect, they should continue to be good wives and mothers (Yegenoglu, 1998: 134). In a sense, 'new women' are expected to preserve the "inner domain" by protecting the institution of family and by being good mothers.

The idealized woman in those novels is judged according to their loyalty to moral values and to the importance they give to family and motherhood. In *Bir Tereddutun Romani*, for example, the writer in the book stressed the importance of family protection as the most important institution in Turkish society. He defends the idea that family ought to be preserved from the negative aspects of Westernization. He says:

The modern form of family is out of the question. This institution the origin of which dates back to thousands of years ago is by no means a new invention like radio and Charleston. It is reasonable to say a dancing room or a woman is modern; a wig or a bar can be modern too; but a modern family? No, dear! It cannot be modern; just like the impossibility of a modern prayer, a modern *kable* (qibla) or a modern *imam* (imam), it is impossible!

(Safa, 1998: 48)

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Because of the indifference of Vildan, the writer in the novel blames her of not being a mother and he considers this as the main reason of her unhappiness in a passage as follows:

The eternity of women lies not in her brain but in her uterus. The New Woman has mistaken about the centre of creativity. Your despair is caused by this. You can be immortalized only by becoming a mother to a child rather than being a translator of Pirandello.[. . .] I can assure you that those people like a local *imam*, a granny, a priest or a wise old man, who say “Marry, settle down and give birth to a child!” are not wrong in telling this as you think. We take it an originality to reject what the tradition advises us to do; this is not merely your fault; rather, it is a confusion of the snobbery resulted by the influence of Westernization. All those new currents, which are doomed to fail, as they do not suck from the breasts of tradition breed millions of victims like you. The punishment for our lack of respect for motherhood will be dreadful twice since it is caused both by your nature and society. Thus, I would say your happiness, your ideal and your everything is in your abdomen. As usual, it will be your abdomen that governs the world.

(Safa, 1998: 180–181)

As understood from this quotation, the most important quality describing a woman originates from her abdomen and from her reproductive roles and capabilities. Being a mother and giving birth to a baby is an important criterion to be considered as a member of society. In a way, women’s reproductive roles and motherhood are conditions for inclusion into the national community and for membership. In this respect, the family is often regarded as a microcosm of the ideal society and of the ideal moral order (Papanek, 1994: 32). As such, it has symbolic value to a nation.

In the novels examined, family life and respect to family have been taken into consideration as the most important conditions for the happiness of society. There is an attempt to underline the fact that one of the primary responsibilities of woman is to give priority to familial harmony. Connectedly, the ‘good’ women are portrayed as good wives while the ‘bad’ ones are depicted as untruthful and unchaste women. In the novel *Canan* (Canan) first published in 1925, we come across the image of a dishonest woman (Safa, 1999). Bedia is the wife of Lami who works as a clerk in the national company. Lami has a relationship with Canan, the daughter of Sakir Bey, who is the boss of the company where Lami works. Canan who is the adopted child of Sakir Bey and her wife, Reknaz

Hanim, was once married to a military person and then got divorced. While Bedia is a simple and family-oriented woman, Canan is showy and artificial. In order to get married to this woman, Lami divorces Bedia and after receiving the approval of Sakir Bey, he marries Canan, who has also a secret relationship with one of Sakir Bey's friend, Orhan Bey, who is a married man. After the marriage, although Orhan Bey's wife comes and tells Lami that Canan deceived Lami with her husband, Lami does not want to believe such a claim. Meanwhile, Lami's debt to his company increases progressively as he has difficulty in affording the needs of Canan, who likes to live in a luxurious way. Towards the end of the novel, Canan's real mother comes but Canan does not want anybody to know that this peasant seeming woman is her real mother and due to this reason, she behaves badly towards her. At the end of the novel, Lami realizes that Canan has not only a secret relationship with Orhan Bey, but also with Selim, a friend of Lami, Semsettin who is Bedia's brother and other men. At the end, Canan is killed by her real mother and Lami returns to his wife Bedia.

It is possible to make a comparison between the two female characters of the novel. Bedia is described as a woman "who doesn't pay attention to her hairstyle and she doesn't use makeup. Even when she is very pale, she does not use any lipstick or she hates coloring her eyes" (Safa, 1999, p.36). However, Canan is portrayed as a very well cared for woman and as a *femme fatale* wearing expensive clothes and jewels, indulging in unnecessary expenses and having different love affairs with different men. Bedia represents everything, which is opposite to the personality of Canan. She is a family-oriented woman, a virtuous wife, a self-sacrificing person; a serious and chaste woman. Although her husband gets married to another woman, she never gives up giving priority to familial harmony. Bedia makes concessions in order to avoid entering into conflict with her husband even though this hurts her. She even blames herself for the love affair of her husband with Canan because she thinks that she could not be a mother and to give a child to her husband. She says "a child could attach her father to the family and prevent all this confusion. It would never lead to any conflict. What is a great pleasure of being a mother of a child" (Safa, 1999: 14).

This means that the idealized woman is not only the virtuous one but also she is the one who is family-oriented. She represents

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virtue, which lies in her marital fidelity, her chastity and her submissive love to her husband. Canan, on the other hand, the image of the loose, easy and dishonest woman, represents a type of “civilized woman” in the writer’s terms. The ideas and the worries of the writer about this “civilized woman” equated with a *femme fatale* have been voiced by Selim who is the friend of Lami in the novel:

The civilized woman is intelligent. Self-indulgence is her priority. She absolutely owns a desire to betray her husband as she finds the family as an institution ridiculous and knows that it will ultimately dissolve one day: these are the women of the future.”

(Safa, 1999: 148).

The “civilized woman” Canan, illustrated as a dishonest person, dies at the end of the novel. In a way, she deserves this ‘punishment’ because she is not the real idealized Turkish woman.

To summarize, it is possible to argue that the importance attributed to the notion of ‘family’ and motherhood remain crucial in understanding gendered dimension of nationalism as well as the imagination of women as gendered national subjects. Because women biologically reproduce, they are always conceptualized as ‘mothers’ of members of collective identities. Women’s primary roles and duties are defined in regard to motherhood and family, which is always taken into consideration as a microcosm of the ideal moral order.

## MASCULINIZATION OF WOMEN

In all these themes elaborated in the novels, we come across the fact that women have been constructed on the basis of a male system of values. In the representation of these different images concerning the ideal women, the male voice, the male-oriented attitudes and a male system of values have been dominant in the construction of Turkish women. In the novels, the female characters have been described by men. In the novel *Canan*, for example, Selim defines women as ‘simple creatures under the analysis and the judgment of men’. He even goes one step further by suggesting that ‘they owe all their attractiveness, their charms, their outrageous strength to our sensitiveness. If men had been more cool-headed, the eternal slavery of women would have been obvious. Many women learn from men that they are charming and



pretty' (Safa, 1999: 40). In *Bir Tereddutun Romani*, the narrator judges women characters on the basis of male norms and in one part, he affirms that 'I always take into consideration the difference between a man and a woman even though she is an intellectual' (Safa, 1998: 55).

By the masculinization of women, I suggest that the male is cast as protector and decision maker while the female, however, is relegated mainly to the role of mother, wife, educator and carriers of tradition and cultural values. Although women become visible in the country's social and political life, the limits of their visibility in public space and their participation are decided by the male. Women constitute part of the male self. By this, I would like to say that the female self is not individuated. The male consciousness prescribes what is right and false for women and in almost all novels, it is a man, the male consciousness who 'enlightens woman', who 'teaches her the proper conduct of behavior', who 'controls her sexuality' and who makes her 'a good woman' through his advice. Most interestingly, several female characters are thought to think as men, to identify with a male point of view and to internalize the male system of principles. In other words, although women were portrayed as asexual beings, the ideal women were constructed on male norms. In this respect, they were 'masculinized'.

#### CONCLUSION

From the novels discussed in this article, it is possible to conclude that in the novels, women characters have two different positions coded by the Republican epistemology. Since the woman question was overtaken within the context of nationalism, women have been portrayed as active participants in social life. The idealized women fulfill their roles as equal partners to men. In these characterizations of women, there is the representation of a speaking subject symbolizing a modern woman. This position can be explained as a 'subject position', where women have to move out into the public sphere to participate in social and political life. The other position is an 'object position', according to which they symbolize preservers of the traditional concepts of femininity. Their sexuality has to be erased in order to preserve the concept of morality, which remains at the backbone of the idea of organic solidarity. In this object position, they are regarded as carriers of moral rules, mothers and

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good wives.

With regard to the themes, the novels have been structured around a conflict between good and bad female characters where the author definitely encourages the former and punishes the latter. The good ones were portrayed as models symbolizing the idealized Turkish women; the bad ones representing an anomaly to the collective identity either by their behaviors or as in most of the time by their perception of morality, were punished by the writers. In this respect, it might be said that characters in fiction have the duty of mirroring the importance of society and thus, they are expected to serve for the enforcement of the idea of organic solidarity. Women as national subjects have been created as a part of the collective identity and as a reflection of the notion of the collective soul.

The female characters are expected to be good mothers and wives. The emphasis on female chastity and the consideration of women from a moral point of view is an important motif. Sometimes, they have to be feminine but in all cases—their femininity has to be controlled. On the other hand, in this construction, they have to be masculinized in order to be accepted as equal members of the nation. Briefly stated, in this imagination and in this fictive world, this is the writer, the novelist of the fiction who dictates how ‘an idealized woman’ should be. As a result, women have a subjugated position and this position has been determined by the writers who consider themselves responsible for representing the society—the Turkish nation.

The points presented here are the main features of the first side of the coin. At first sight, these authors might seem to have full authority to determine the characteristics of national subjects and in subjugating them in the dominant nationalist discourse; the other side of the coin is not the same because the author himself can be also seen as part of the dominant hegemonic structure of power. Although the author appears in the scene as the creator of the fiction, as the person who produced the novel, he cannot create the fiction of his own imagination. Even though he gives the impression of producing the tale as a work of imagination and of designing the main characters and the story by himself, indeed he is not able to create independently, by his own efforts. In a way, like all the characters in the fiction, *Je*—the author—is also another.

The author has not the right to create the fiction and the characters of the fiction on his own. In other words, the author does not say 'I' either like the characters of the novels and he cannot write novels from an individualistic position but he writes according to 'we'. This brings us to the conclusion that the author is also a representative of the idea of '*Je est un autre*'. The self of the author is dependent as much as the fictive self. Since in the novels, the self is not individuated, the self of the writer is also communal. To say differently, the author is as much dependent as the characters. For that reason, even in the case of the author, who appears to narrate the fiction, there is the control of 'we' over 'I'. As all the characters that have been constructed in accordance of the collective project and of the nationalist discourse, the same features of the dominant nationalist structure also have constructed the author.

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